

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Freetown, with Government Wharf in the foreground.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Tuesday, 31 July 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Salone Times
Tuesday, 31 July 2007

BAR ASSOCIATION TALKS TOUGH

LAWYERS WANT CERTAIN PRISONERS FREED

By Josephine Lagawa

President of Sierra Leone Bar Association Crispin Feo Edwards has said that there are certain prisoners that are remanded at the Pademba Road Prison, simply because they do not have funds to hire solicitors.

There are others, he added, that have been in custody for very long periods of time up to six years or more because their files have reportedly been misplaced.

He went on to say that the Bar Association would be looking into such cases with a view to having such suspects' cases speeded up or have them released without conditionalities. The Association, he went

on, would also be setting up a human rights committee that would be visiting the Pademba Road Prison and all other prisons with a view to seeing for themselves, the living conditions in these

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Bar Association Gets Tough

places, as well as to get first hand information from remanded prisoners about the cases for which they were remanded.

Mr. Edwards was speaking to the press at the Sierra Leone Law School, Lamina Sankoh Street in Freetown over the weekend, following his election as President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA) and his new executive. He maintained that the Bar Association would henceforth take very keen interest in all matters including bail conditions, charges leveled on suspects, length of court trials and other matters affecting the smooth

running of the courts.

According to him, the Bar Association is interested in the present developments with regard the run-up to the elections very seriously and would shortly dispatch correspondence to the NEC Commissioner stating their interest in ensuring fair and credible elections.

The Vice President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Amadu Koroma, re-echoed Mr. Edwards statement that, the Association would be watching the election process closely and joining forces with other bodies as they too want to see a free, fair and credible election that would be non violent.

Institute for War & Peace Reporting (London)

Friday, 27 July 2007

Forced Marriage Appeal May Influence ICC

By Katy Glassborow
The Hague

The chief prosecutor for war crimes in Sierra Leone is preparing to appeal the acquittals of three military leaders accused of forcing women into marriage, in a move that he hopes could help bring convictions on similar charges at the International Criminal Court.

On June 20, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL, found Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape, sexual slavery and conscripting child soldiers. On July 19, Brima and Kanu were sentenced to 50 years in prison, while Kamara received 45 years.

But the trial judges said they saw no need to treat forced marriage as a crime separate to sexual slavery, and threw out the charges. Such charges had never before been tried at an international tribunal.

Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp will appeal this decision, which he called "formulistic", on August 2.

He told IWPR that the charge of forced marriage accurately described the experience of women who were kidnapped by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, AFRC, a militia made up of government soldiers who joined up with the rebel Revolutionary United Front, RUF, to fight the government-backed Civil Defence Forces, CDF.

The conflict lasted 11 years and claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions.

Attacks were carried out against civilians to terrorise and punish those who didn't support the rebels, with physical mutilations, including the amputation of hands and feet, a common feature of the conflict.

Civilians were routinely abducted, and captured women were raped and used as sex slaves or forced labourers - an experience prosecutors said comprised a distinct inhumane act of forced marriage.

Rapp identified a "reluctance to convict this crime which has never been pleaded before at an international level".

Just as the charge indicates, forced marriage occurs by force and without the consent of the women concerned, their parents or the community, and Rapp had intended to prosecute it as a crime against humanity.

He will appeal the judges' logic that despite evidence of sexual slavery, the indictments - which include counts of both sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence - were overlapping.

Trial judges said the prosecutor's evidence was "completely subsumed by the crime of sexual slavery and that there is no lacuna in the law which would necessitate a separate crime of forced marriage as another inhumane act".

They said that the count of "sexual slavery and any other form of sexual violence" is "bad for duplicity", so in the interests of justice elected to consider evidence of sexual slavery under the count of "outrages upon personal dignity".

Despite the legal loopholes and technicalities, the sad fact is that sex crimes and crimes of sexual violence are often pervasive in conflict and examples of rape and sexual slavery as a weapon of war or a tool of ethnic cleansing have a long history.

Rape and sexual slavery feature in cases at the ICC, including the insurgency in Uganda, the conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan, the failed military coup in the Central African Republic and the inter-ethnic fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Indeed, the founding statute of the ICC formally criminalises a whole tranche of sex crimes used as a tool in conflict, such as enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, for the first time in international law.

Despite this leap forward in the recognition of sexual war crimes, international prosecutions of such acts have only occurred in the recent past at the UN backed International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

But Rapp says they were invariably prosecuted as rape, and argues that the experience of women in conflict is often a lot more complex. He argues that forced marriage should not be viewed unequivocally as a sex offence.

Women who were kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery for troops during the Japanese occupation of Korea in World War II are often referred to as "comfort women", but Rapp insists that the experience of "bush wives" in Sierra Leone was unique.

"They were conscripted into a marital relationship, with all that that entails, which is more than being a comfort woman or a rape victim," he told IWPR.

This is why SCSL prosecutors were so keen to prosecute this charge as an inhumane act in the first place, and will now appeal the not-guilty verdict.

"We talked to women who still feel tied to their 'husbands', even after the conflict has ended," said Rapp.

But judges found the men guilty for sexual slavery and orchestrating forced sex on a continuing basis, as opposed to something broader encompassing ways women were made into wives, like cooking and caring for their kidnappers in a relationship akin to a forcibly-imposed civil marriage.

"In the context of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population, voluntary consent was rendered impossible," said Rapp.

However, he told IWPR that proving the ways women were abused or compelled to perform "marital" services wasn't the focus of witness testimonies, so judges thought it possible to encompass this experience within the umbrella of sexual slavery.

The chief prosecutor also argues that being conscripted into a marital relationship causes psychological damage, and that the particular ways in which the rights of women are violated goes beyond pure sexual violence.

"This is why we wanted to have forced marriage recognised as a crime that took place in Sierra Leone, and we will continue to try to have this recognised beyond this appeal," said Rapp.

Judges found that the motivator in the relationships between soldiers and kidnapped women was sexual, and therefore overwhelmingly a situation of the women being exclusive sex slaves.

Rapp said that if another man had taken one of these women away, it would have been seen as a violation of the "owner's" rights.

"We saw that as an aspect of forced marriage," said Rapp, "but the judges saw this as an exclusive form of sexual slavery."

The trouble is that rape and sexual slavery are crimes clearly set out in the statutes of both the SCSL and the ICC, while forced marriage is not explicitly listed as a crime under either statute but can be charged as an inhumane act.

International law relating to war crimes provides that if other acts occur in connection to a widespread and systematic attack against civilians, which constitute a crime against humanity and are of equal gravity to other offences under the statute, they can be charged.

"I think the judges left it open that if you have proof of criminal activity that goes beyond sexual slavery that fits within the context of other obligations that arise out of marriage, there could still be a conviction on that count," said Rapp.

He is hopeful that a successful appeal would make it possible for forced marriage to be prosecuted in other conflicts where the crime occurs.

Sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence are crimes under the ICC's statute, so Rapp says the prosecution and appeal at the AFRC will guide investigators and prosecutors at the ICC in how to pursue these charges.

The AFRC trial could set a precedent enabling war crimes tribunals to deal with other horrendous acts which cannot specifically be foreseen in the chaos of conflict, but of equal gravity to crimes already listed under other inhumane acts.

If SCSL judges hold that on appeal, the crime of forced marriage can be prosecuted, Rapp feels this may have a bearing on the ICC.

"We have seen that the tribunals do not slavishly follow each other, but find each others decisions highly persuasive," said Rapp.

Katy Glassborow is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

Macleans.ca

Tuesday, 31 July 2007

http://www.macleans.ca/world/global/article.jsp?content=20070806_108101_108101&page=2

Charles Taylor: The danger of defying voodoo

Testifying against a Liberian despot is a peril, even in Canada

MICHAEL PETROU

Shortly before beginning his 1997 campaign for the presidency of Liberia, Charles Taylor, a former warlord widely held responsible for funding and controlling an army of drug-addled children in neighbouring Sierra Leone, made a special trip to Burkina Faso to visit a voodoo priest. There, according to Cindor Reeves, Taylor's former brother-in-law who accompanied him on the trip, the priest slaughtered a cow, cooked the liver, the heart and other organs, and gave them to Taylor to eat as part of a ritual to ensure his success in the election. "The voodoo he made was that anyone who heard the sound of Taylor's voice would follow him, like flies follow shit," Reeves said. "I don't really believe this stuff, but I saw a lot of people under his spell -- even people who were violated by Taylor's soldiers. They would flock to watch him pass."

Prior to the election, Taylor had led a militia called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia that had taken control of most of Liberia during six years of civil war. The election was the result of a peace accord that ended the fighting. Although Taylor won in an overwhelming landslide, his fortunes have since changed. He is now facing trial at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to his alleged backing of rebel groups during Sierra Leone's civil war.

Continued Below

Cindor Reeves's life has changed as well. He was once one of Taylor's most trusted insiders, but in 2001 he broke with Taylor. He has been on the run ever since, dodging assassins, first in West Africa, then in Europe. By 2002 he was in contact with the Special Court and promised to testify against Taylor. But fearing for his life, Reeves fled his family to Canada. He presents a dilemma for Ottawa. On the one hand, his testimony may prove crucial to convicting Taylor -- a big fish among suspected war criminals. On the other, Reeves, who has applied for refugee status, is himself tainted by his past association with Taylor. A Jan. 26 letter to his lawyer from an officer in the war crimes and public security unit of the Canada Border Services Agency notes Reeves "may have aided and abetted in the commission of ... war crimes."

But Reeves's problems are more acute than the possibility of being denied refugee status, or even of facing trial himself one day. After arriving in Canada, he kept a low profile. Liberians he met here knew nothing about his past. This changed last month when Reeves ended a long silence and told his story to Maclean's. Now, virtually wherever he goes where other Liberians are present, friends and acquaintances warn him that his life is in danger if he insists on testifying. Reeves says he has met or seen some 15 former commanders or fighters from Taylor's NPFL since arriving in Canada. Many Liberians in Canada, even if not previously involved in the NPFL, are Taylor supporters and are furious with Reeves because of his plans to testify. Some have pending refugee claims, Reeves says, and would not risk their legal status by harming or even directly threatening him. But the warnings are frequent and, Reeves believes, credible. One came from an old friend who is still closely linked to Taylor's inner circle, but wants to protect Reeves. Reeves played a phone message for Maclean's from another Liberian in Canada

who told him not to testify because no one will believe him. Reeves has also received a few messages of support from Liberians in Canada, but these do little to reassure him. "I'm so afraid," he said. "If I'm alone, it would be one thing. But now all I can think of are my wife and kids." It is difficult to understand why so many Liberian Canadians apparently support a man believed to be responsible for some of the most heinous crimes conceivable against civilians, women and children. During Liberia's civil wars, its citizens so craved an end to outright warfare that many were willing to throw their support behind any strongman who seemed capable of ending the chaos. But this doesn't explain Taylor's support among Liberians in Canada, especially when Liberia itself is now a peaceful democracy under the presidency of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Reeves suggested that a disproportionate number of Taylor supporters have come to Canada, but he also admits that Taylor was widely loved. "He had a certain charisma over the people. It's hard to explain," Reeves said. Then he recalled the trip that he and Taylor took to Burkina Faso and the ceremony conducted there by the voodoo priest. "Maybe it worked," he said.

UN News Service (New York)

Monday, 30 July 2007

UN, Partners Voice 'Utmost Concern' At Electoral Violence

The United Nations and its international partners have voiced renewed concern at widely reported cases of intimidation and violence ahead of elections in Sierra Leone next month, calling on all concerned to avoid incitement and provocation in the small West African country that is still recovering from a disastrous decade-long civil war.

"The UN and international community remain fully committed to supporting credible, fair and violence-free elections," the partners said in a weekend statement, which welcomed positive steps by the Government, including a successful voter registration exercise and preparations for polling, counting, tallying and the announcement of results.

"However, since the official start of campaigning, cases of intimidation and violence have been widely reported. We view this development with utmost concern. It constitutes a threat to the democratic process. It also goes against the interests of the people of Sierra Leone, who want peaceful, free and credible elections," they added.

The statement called upon leaders of all political parties to promote a peaceful campaign and prevent provocative conduct on the part of their supporters as the country prepares to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections on 11 August, the second since emerging from the civil war in 2002.

It urged the political parties, Paramount Chiefs and the media to respect the codes of conduct that they have signed and to use existing and legitimate mechanisms to resolve disputes peacefully.

"We urge all political parties to use accredited party agents at polling stations to monitor the elections. The leaders of all political parties are urged to declare that they will accept the results of the elections and to encourage their supporters to do the same," it added.

Sierra Leone is one of the first beneficiaries of the UN's new Peacebuilding Fund, launched last October to ensure that countries emerging from war and conflict do not relapse back into strife. Earlier this month the Fund approved four new projects to support the ongoing electoral process and improve the judiciary, water, sanitation and health facilities.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 30 July 2007

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

BBC Last Updated: Saturday, 28 July 2007, 16:47 GMT 17:47 UK

Liberia lifts diamond mining ban

The Liberian government has lifted a six-year-old moratorium on the mining, sale and export of diamonds, imposed at the height of the civil war. The industry came under UN sanctions in 2001, when ex-President Charles Taylor was accused of using the sale proceeds to fund wars in West African nations. Correspondents say he imposed the moratorium in a bid to show compliance.

International Clips on West Africa

BBC Last Updated: Monday, 30 July 2007, 14:02 GMT 15:02 UK

Ivory Coast leaders burn weapons

Ivory Coast's president and prime minister have set fire to stockpiled weapons to symbolizes the end of the two men's five-year conflict. It was the first time that President Laurent Gbagbo had gone to the former rebel-held north since 2002, when an uprising against him split the country. "People of Ivory Coast, the war is over," he said in Bouake. Mr Gbagbo signed a peace deal in March with ex-rebel leader Guillaume Soro, who was later named as prime minister.

VOA 29 July 2007

Women's Rights Entrenched in Sierra Leone

By Akwei Thompson, Washington, D.C.

Last month, Sierra Leone's parliament enacted three laws that give women unprecedented rights. One human rights coalition said the new laws will "help to radically improve the legal position of women in Sierra Leone. Jasmine Fofana is the first vice-president of the Mano River Peace Network and a commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone. From Kenema, in South Eastern Sierra Leone, she explained to Akwei Thompson the wide-sweeping nature of the new laws.

Local Media – Newspaper

Liberia Lifts Moratorium on Diamond Mining

(The Analyst, The Informer and National Chronicle)

- The Liberian Government said on Saturday that it had lifted a six-year moratorium on diamond mining in the country, announcing that people can start applying for mining, selling and broker licenses as of Monday, 30 July 2007. The United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia's diamonds in May 2001 and, to comply with the sanctions, the Liberian government placed a moratorium on all mining activities.

Government Announces Plans to repave Major Highways

(Heritage and Liberian Express)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has announced plans by the Government to repave major highways in the country after the rainy season. The Monrovia-Robertsfield and Buchanan highways are among major routes linking Monrovia that are due to be repaved during the dry season.

Key Opposition Party Presses for Comprehensive National Agenda

(The News)

- One of Liberia's opposition political parties, Liberty Party, has urged the Government to institute a comprehensive national agenda that would address sticky national issues to ensure reconciliation.
- In a statement, the said the agenda should involve the participation of political leaders and stakeholders to discuss issues of corruption, shabby oil deals and hikes in prices of essential commodities, among other pressing matters which it believes hinder national growth.

Local Media – Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 9:00 am)*

Truth Commission Deploys Statement takers to Rural Liberia

- Speaking to correspondents, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Gbarpolu County Coordinator, Mohamed Kanneh said that the Commission has deployed 'Statement takers' throughout the County to obtain confessions from heads of institutions, women groups and ex-combatants. *(Also reported on Radio Veritas and ELBS)*

UNMIL Peacekeepers Donate Vegetable Seeds to Groups in Bassa

- Correspondents said that the Bangladeshi contingent of UNMIL in Grand Bassa County donated assorted vegetable seeds to the County-based Common Ground Society, On Your Own Agriculture Organization and Gebbeac. Bangladeshi peacekeeper Monawai Hossiao stated that the donation was part of the contingent's contribution to enhance agricultural activities in Grand Bassa.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas and ELBS)

President Asks Population to Keep Liberia Clean

- Inspecting an on-going project to beautify major streets including the Broad Street yesterday, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf called on Liberians to help keep the Country clean not littering the streets and gardens intended to beautify cities throughout the Country.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas and ELBS)

BBC Online

Tuesday, 31 July 2007

ICC asked to probe Nujoma 'abuse'

The International Criminal Court has been asked to investigate the role of former Namibian President Sam Nujoma, in the deaths of thousands of people.

The Namibian Society of Human Rights lodged a submission with the ICC, accusing Mr Nujoma and other officials of instigating the deaths of Namibians.

Some were allegedly killed after being accused of spying for South Africa.



Sam Nujoma is seen as Namibia's founding father

Mr Nujoma, 78, led Namibia's struggle for independence from South Africa and became its president in 1990.

He stepped down in 2005 after serving three terms in office.

The NSHR said it had evidence that bodies were pushed down a deep crevasse near the border with Angola.

The petition calls for Mr Nujoma and three others to be investigated for "instigation, planning, supervision, abetting, aiding, defending and or perpetuating" the disappearances of some 4,200 people.

The ruling South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo) has denied having any role in the deaths.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 31 July 2007

Uganda rebels want \$2m for talks

Uganda's rebels are demanding \$2m from donors, or they say they will not return to peace talks in South Sudan.

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) technical adviser David Nyekorach told the BBC the money was needed for consultations with its various groups.

Talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA rebels were expected to resume this week.

Some 2m people have fled their homes and thousands of children have been abducted during the 20-year conflict

In January, the LRA refused to resume talks after Sudan's president accused them of committing atrocities in South Sudan and threatened to evict them.

They however returned following a meeting between UN peace envoy Joachim Chissano and LRA leader Joseph Kony.

Promises

Mr Nyekorach said their technical team has been unable to travel to the affected areas to solicit the views of its people due to lack of funding.

"The talks are on course but we cannot return to the table without suggestions from the people, so this money is important," Mr Nyekorach told the BBC.

He said donors had failed to pay the money they had promised.

Uganda's government has also indicated that it is not ready to resume talks aimed at achieving peace in the north of the country.

Mr Nyekorach said they hope that the funding would be released to enable the peace talks to resume at the end of August.

LRA leader Joseph Kony and three of his top commanders are wanted for war crimes at the International Criminal Court and have indicated that no deal will be signed while the warrants for their arrest are still in place.

But last month, the two sides agreed to use Ugandan justice to address human rights abuses.



Thousands still live in displaced camps



Peace talks bring change